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Sent: Thursday, February 23, 2017 10:55 AM
To: Trefny, Charles
Subject: Re: Northern Ohio Fire Fighters in Columbus March 1st

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> **Subject:** RE: Northern Ohio Fire Fighters in Columbus March 1st
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From: Westlake, Libby
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2017 8:25 AM
To: Westlake, Libby
Subject: E-Clips for 2/24/2017

HOUSE E-CLIPS

2/24/2017

Associated Press

OHIO, WISCONSIN KICK-START TALKS ON MANAGING TRUMP EFFECT

Republican legislative leaders from Ohio and Wisconsin are working together, hoping other states will join them, as they prepare for changes in how the federal government under President Donald Trump deals with states.

KASICH CLEARED TO GIVE STATE OF THE STATE SPEECH IN SANDUSKY

Ohio lawmakers have signed off on the governor's plan to deliver his annual State of the State speech in Sandusky.

OHIO TASK FORCE FINDS MIXED PROGRESS ON COLLEGE COST-CUTTING

The group said too few schools have identified how resources will improve college affordability and education quality.

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Dayton Daily News
www.daytondailynews.com

NEW RULES SET FOR MEDICAL MARIJUANA USE IN OHIO

Ohio is taking steps to make sure medical marijuana isn't pitched in a way that is attractive to kids by banning cartoon characters, candy look-alikes and fruit shapes and requiring child-resistant packaging.

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From: Gongwer News Service
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2017 8:30 AM
To: DL_Gongwer
Subject: Ohio Media Clips, Friday, February 24

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NEWS

GOP effort could ax prevailing wage for workers (Cincinnati Enquirer, 2/24/2017)

Hundreds gather to protest Mitch McConnell and Donald Trump (Cincinnati Enquirer, 2/24/2017)

2018 Ohio governor's race gets more 'official' with Mary Taylor: Ohio Politics Roundup (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2/24/2017)

Halt Ohio's ESSA plan until state testing is cut, 150 angry educators, officials tell state (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2/24/2017)

Indivisible town hall attendees take on the absent Rob Portman at Cleveland church (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2/24/2017)

Ohio cities could stop paying prevailing wage to construction workers under proposed bill (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2/24/2017)

Proposed limits for medical marijuana supply in Ohio among strictest (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2/24/2017)

Sean Spicer headlining D.C. fundraiser for Ohio Sen. Frank LaRose (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2/24/2017)

Buckeye, Cheesehead leaders team up to tackle Trump-era challenges (Columbus Dispatch, 2/24/2017)

GOP leaders oppose teacher 'externship' plan (Columbus Dispatch, 2/24/2017)

Kasich summoned to help craft Medicaid solution amid Obamacare repeal (Columbus Dispatch, 2/24/2017)

Mary Taylor now formally governor candidate (Columbus Dispatch, 2/24/2017)

Natural gas tax kicked from budget (Columbus Dispatch, 2/24/2017)

Trump's transgender policy won't change how most local schools operate (Columbus Dispatch, 2/24/2017)

Who really stopped Dems from attending Portman speech? (Columbus Dispatch, 2/24/2017)

Bills would streamline prescription process for Ohio patients (Dayton Daily News, 2/24/2017)

John Boehner: Repealing Obamacare just 'happy talk' (Dayton Daily News, 2/24/2017)

New rules set for medical marijuana use in Ohio (Dayton Daily News, 2/24/2017)

Gun silencer bills could spark sales (Toledo Blade, 2/24/2017)

Report finds $1B in savings in higher ed (Toledo Blade, 2/24/2017)

EDITORIALS

Deportation force, as pledged (Akron Beacon Journal, 2/24/2017)

Editorial: Talking is better than dodging (Columbus Dispatch, 2/24/2017)

Portman under wraps (Toledo Blade, 2/24/2017)

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To: DL_Gongwer
Subject: Ohio Media Clips, Monday, February 27

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OHIO'S HOME FOR POLICY & POLITICS

News
Bill Tracking
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NEWS

Kasich cleared to give State of the State speech in Sandusky (Akron Beacon Journal, 2/27/2017)

Ohio bill outlawing marital rape gets no GOP support, again (Akron Beacon Journal, 2/27/2017)

After bitter feud, Kasich and Trump try to mend fences (Cincinnati Enquirer, 2/27/2017)

Kasich budget assumes Cincinnati could raise more taxes (Cincinnati Enquirer, 2/27/2017)

Kasich to GOP: Full Obamacare repeal 'not acceptable' (Cincinnati Enquirer, 2/27/2017)

Portman denies keeping Democrats out of political event (Cincinnati Enquirer, 2/27/2017)

Gov. John Kasich and Rep. Jim Jordan duel on TV over Obamacare repeal (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2/27/2017)

Gov. John Kasich talks with President Trump about reforming Obamacare (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2/27/2017)

Ohio congress members seek investigation of Jewish community center bomb threats (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2/27/2017)

Tom Gunlock, former state school board president, leaves board (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2/27/2017)

Capitol Insider: Kasich can relate to Trump's kerfuffles (Columbus Dispatch, 2/27/2017)

Grass-roots foes of Trump, GOP make noise in Ohio (Columbus Dispatch, 2/27/2017)

Kasich says town hall protests might be getting through to Capitol Hill (Columbus Dispatch, 2/27/2017)

Kasich, GOP at odds over Medicaid coverage (Columbus Dispatch, 2/27/2017)

Ohio may pay counties to take inmates off its hands (Columbus Dispatch, 2/27/2017)

Trump has many believers in small-town Ohio (Columbus Dispatch, 2/27/2017)

Kasich fights for federal health care funds (Dayton Daily News, 2/27/2017)

Local governments told to 'open books' (Toledo Blade, 2/27/2017)

Ohio officers tasked with keeping race, gender data (Toledo Blade, 2/27/2017)

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A better death penalty for Ohio (Akron Beacon Journal, 2/27/2017)

Bickering over Gov. Kasich's traveling State of the State passes for political discourse in Ohio: Thomas Suddes (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2/27/2017)

Keep defending Ohio Medicaid expansion, Gov. Kasich: editorial (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2/27/2017)

Editorial: Victims seek more court leverage (Columbus Dispatch, 2/27/2017)

Governor got this right (Toledo Blade, 2/27/2017)

Right-to-work law still totally wrong for Ohio (Youngstown Vindicator, 2/27/2017)

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From: Ohio House Republican Communications
Sent: Monday, March 6, 2017 4:56 PM
Subject: GOP Week in Review 2/27/17 – 3/5/17

OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Majority Communications Department

GOP Week in Review

2/27/17 - 3/5/17

The Lima News: **McColley helps pass state transportation budget**
McColley also chairs the House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation, which played a key role in crafting the bill. "House Bill 26 strikes a balance between financing Ohio's transportation priorities while being a responsible watchdog of taxpayer dollars," he said. "A lot of creative ideas and input went into the crafting of this budget, and I am confident that it will help Ohio meet its infrastructure needs in the future."

Gallipolis Daily Tribune: **Ohio House passes transportation budget**
"This infrastructure package is an important step to rebuild our communities," said House Finance Chair Ryan Smith (R-Bidwell). "The transportation budget makes an investment of $7.8 billion that will maintain our roads and improve our economic competitiveness."

Cincinnati Business Courier**: Cincinnati could reap big benefits from Ohio transportation bill**
"We all know there's not enough money to do everything we need to do," said Rep. Doug Green, R-Mount Orab, chairman of the House's transportation committee.

Toledo Blade: **Ohio House approves $7.8B for transportation**
"This is a declining revenue source," said Rep. Robert McColley (R., Napoleon), the bill= 2s sponsor. "Ohioans are paying less gas tax now than they have in years past. It's actually getting below the $8 billion mark."

Circleville Herald: **Rep. Scherer Votes for State Transportation Budget**
"I am pleased with the passage and to be a co-sponsor of the transportation budget," said Scherer. "This passage allows for us to put funding back into our state's infrastructure and continue growth all across the state of Ohio."

The Morning Journal: **Ohio lawmaker's highway bill aims to reach suffering veterans**

State Rep. Steve Hambley says it could help remind veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder to reach out for help.

The Morning Journal: **Ohio House approves bill on protective orders for dating violence**

Rep. Emelia Strong Sykes, an Akron Democrat, and Rep. Nathan Manning, a North Ridgeville Republican, are sponsoring the bill.

Youngstown Vindicator: **Pharmacists could offer much cheaper version of EpiPen if Ohio bill becomes law**

The Blade reports the bill introduced last week by state Rep. Derek Merrin would allow substitution only with the patient's permission. Doctors still can insist on the brand-name EpiPen. Merrin, a Republican, says he sees the bill as a national model, "free-market solution" to the Mylan pricing issue.

The Morning Journal: **Ohio Rep. Wes Retherford reintroduces bill aimed at curbing elder abuse**

State Rep. Wes Retherford's Elder Justice Act unanimously cleared the Ohio House last year. … Retherford, a Hamilton Republican, said changes have been made to the bill to address the issues raised.

Dayton Daily News: **Butler County lawmaker re-introduces elder abuse bill**

Retherford said he and now former Ohio Rep. Mike Dovilla, R-Berea, moved in 2014 to put a $10 million appropriation for Adult Protective Services in the Mid-Biennium Review bill in anticipation of the Elder Justice Act "because that was the number one concern we heard back."

Cincinnati Enquirer: **Guest column from Rep. John Becker: New right-to-work bill restores workers' rights**

It's about freedom. I authored Ohio House Bill 53 to restore the freedom of association to public-sector employees. This right-to-work legislation provides public-sector workers the freedom to opt out of union representation and dues. A private sector right to work bill will soon be introduced by one of my colleagues in the Ohio House of Representatives.

Mount Vernon News: **Goodwill opens in Fredericktown**

Rick Carfagna, State Representative of House District 68, was there to give the store an official welcome from the Ohio House of Representatives.

The Findlay Courier: **Editorial: SNAP fraud**

Two lawmakers, Rep. Tim Schaffer, R-Lancaster, and Sen. Matt Huffman, R-Lima, have proposed legislation that would add photos to food stamp EBT cards in an effort to reduce "trafficking," in which recipients swap SNAP benefits for money. The bills are worth consideration.

Van Wert Independent: **State legislators meet with SWCD staff**
State Representative Craig Riedel and State Senator Cliff Hite met this past week with representatives of the Van Wert County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) at the recent annual "Conservation Partnership Meeting" held in downtown Columbus.

The Morrow County Sentinel: **Mount Gilead High School seniors engage education experts in discussion**
Ohio House Representative from District 87, Wesley A. Goodman also discussed state and national perspectives on education with the students.

Record Herald: **Guest column from Speaker Cliff Rosenberger: Coming together to celebrate Ohio history**
It is no secret that I am a history enthusiast, especially when it comes to the stories of our state and nation. This week marked Ohio's 214th birthday, 214 years since its official induction into the United States.

Circleville Herald: **Rep. Scherer honors essay winner**
"I was honored to be able to recognize Kalila for her tremendous work in this competition and I was pleased to be able to discuss her passion for the issues she addressed in her writing piece," Scherer said.

Sentinel-Tribune**: Gavarone appointed to House Finance Committee**
"I am honored by the speaker's decision to appoint me to House Finance Committee," Gavarone said. "I am excited to work with Chairman Smith and the other members of the Finance Committee as we move towards delivering a budget that benefits all citizens of Ohio."

Salem News**: State Representative honors Wilson as state champion**
"It was an absolute privilege to honor Jared with a resolution today," Ginter said. "Jared is a tremendously talented golfer, but also a very dedicated student for which he should be commended. I believe that Jared has a very bright future ahead."

Record Herald**: Peterson discusses tax policy with municipal leaders**
"It's important that we, as members of the House and Senate continue to meet with the representatives of our local municipalities, especially during the budget season," said Representative Anielski. = 3Hearing their concerns allows us to craft a better, more responsive budget for the state of Ohio that works well on every level of governance."

WCMH**: Ohio lawmakers hold first hearing on 'Judy's Law'**

"The judge and the prosecutor did their job the best they could under current law," Hughes said. "It's now time for us in the legislature to do our job to ensure that victims like Judy receive the justice they deserve."

WSPD: **Ohio lawmakers want harsher penalties for distracted driving**

"Law enforcement at that time would determine that distracted driving was the cause of the primary or contributing factor. The law enforcement officer could then charge an additional charge on with that which would be a minor misdemeanor," Hughes says.

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The Lima News: **McColley helps pass state transportation budget**
McColley also chairs the House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation, which played a key role in crafting the bill. "House Bill 26 strikes a balance between financing Ohio's transportation priorities while being a responsible watchdog of taxpayer dollars," he said. "A lot of creative ideas and input went into the crafting of this budget, and I am confident that it will help Ohio meet its infrastructure needs in the future."

Gallipolis Daily Tribune: **Ohio House passes transportation budget**
"This infrastructure package is an important step to rebuild our communities," said House Finance Chair Ryan Smith (R-Bidwell). "The transportation budget makes an investment of $7.8 billion that will maintain our roads and improve our economic competitiveness."

Cincinnati Business Courier**: Cincinnati could reap big benefits from Ohio transportation bill**
"We all know there's not enough money to do everything we need to do," said Rep. Doug Green, R-Mount Orab, chairman of the House's transportation committee.

Toledo Blade: **Ohio House approves $7.8B for transportation**
"This is a declining revenue source," said Rep. Robert McColley (R., Napoleon), the bill's sponsor. "Ohioans are paying less gas tax now than they have in years past. It's actually getting below the $8 billion mark."

Circleville Herald: **Rep. Scherer Votes for State Transportation Budget**
= 3I am pleased with the passage and to be a co-sponsor of the transportation budget," said Scherer. "This passage allows for us to put funding back into our state's infrastructure and continue growth all across the state of Ohio."

The Morning Journal: **Ohio lawmaker's highway bill aims to reach suffering veterans**

State Rep. Steve Hambley says it could help remind veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder to reach out for help.

The Morning Journal: **Ohio House approves bill on protective orders for dating violence**

Rep. Emelia Strong Sykes, an Akron Democrat, and Rep. Nathan Manning, a North Ridgeville Republican, are sponsoring the bill.

Youngstown Vindicator: **Pharmacists could offer much cheaper version of EpiPen if Ohio bill becomes law**

The Blade reports the bill introduced last week by state Rep. Derek Merrin would allow substitution only with the patient's permission. Doctors still can insist on the brand-name EpiPen. Merrin, a Republican, says he sees the bill as a national model, "free-market solution" to the Mylan pricing issue.

The Morning Journal: **Ohio Rep. Wes Retherford reintroduces bill aimed at curbing elder abuse**

State Rep. Wes Retherford= 2s Elder Justice Act unanimously cleared the Ohio House last year. ... Retherford, a Hamilton Republican, said changes have been made to the bill to address the issues raised.

Dayton Daily News: **Butler County lawmaker re-introduces elder abuse bill**

Retherford said he and now former Ohio Rep. Mike Dovilla, R-Berea, moved in 2014 to put a $10 million appropriation for Adult Protective Services in the Mid-Biennium Review bill in anticipation of the Elder Justice Act "because that was the number one concern we heard back.= 4

Cincinnati Enquirer: **Guest column from Rep. John Becker: New right-to-work bill restores workers' rights**

It's about freedom. I authored Ohio House Bill 53 to restore the freedom of association to public-sector employees. This right-to-work legislation provides public-sector workers the freedom to opt out of union representation and dues. A private sector right to work bill will soon be introduced by one of my colleagues in the Ohio House of Representatives.

Mount Vernon News: **Goodwill opens in Fredericktown**

Rick Carfagna, State Representative of House District 68, was there to give the store an official welcome from the Ohio House of Representatives.

The Findlay Courier: **Editorial: SNAP fraud**

Two lawmakers, Rep. Tim Schaffer, R-Lancaster, and Sen. Matt Huffman, R-Lima, have proposed legislation that would add photos to food stamp EBT cards in an effort to

reduce "trafficking," in which recipients swap SNAP benefits for money. The bills are worth consideration.

Van Wert Independent: **State legislators meet with SWCD staff**

State Representative Craig Riedel and State Senator Cliff Hite met this past week with representatives of the Van Wert County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) at the recent annual "Conservation Partnership Meeting" held in downtown Columbus.

The Morrow County Sentinel: **Mount Gilead High School seniors engage education experts in discussion**

Ohio House Representative from District 87, Wesley A. Goodman also discussed state and national perspectives on education with the students.

Record Herald: **Guest column from Speaker Cliff Rosenberger: Coming together to celebrate Ohio history**

It is no secret that I am a history enthusiast, especially when it comes to the stories of our state and nation. This week marked Ohio's 214th birthday, 214 years since its official induction into the United States.

Circleville Herald: **Rep. Scherer honors essay winner**

"I was honored to be able to recognize Kalila for her tremendous work in this competition and I was pleased to be able to discuss her passion for the issues she addressed in her writing piece," Scherer said.

Sentinel-Tribune**: Gavarone appointed to House Finance Committee**

"I am honored by the speaker's decision to appoint me to House Finance Committee," Gavarone said. "I am excited to work with Chairman Smith and the other members of the Finance Committee as we move towards delivering a budget that benefits all citizens of Ohio."

Salem News**: State Representative honors Wilson as state champion**

"It was an absolute privilege to honor Jared with a resolution today," Ginter said. "Jared is a tremendously talented golfer, but also a very dedicated student for which he should be commended. I believe that Jared has a very bright future ahead."

Record Herald**: Peterson discusses tax policy with municipal leaders**

"It's important that we, as members of the House and Senate continue to meet with the representatives of our local municipalities, especially during the budget season," said Representative Anielski. "Hearing their concerns allows us to craft a better, more responsive budget for the state of Ohio that works well on every level of governance."

WCMH**: Ohio lawmakers hold first hearing on 'Judy's Law'**

"The judge and the prosecutor did their job the best they could under current law," Hughes said. "It's now time for us in the legislature to do our job to ensure that victims like Judy receive the justice they deserve."

***WSPD:* Ohio lawmakers want harsher penalties for distracted driving**

"Law enforcement at that time would determine that distracted driving was the cause of the primary or contributing factor. The law enforcement officer could then charge an additional charge on with that which would be a minor misdemeanor," Hughes says.

From: report@hannah.com
Sent: Wednesday, November 1, 2017 10:14 PM
To: DL_Hannah
Subject: Hannah News Stories for Wednesday, November 1, 2017

Wednesday, November 1, 2017

IN TODAY'S HANNAH REPORT:

Please click here to read the entire Hannah Report.

Today's Stories

- House Releases Documents on Harassment Complaints against Three Lawmakers
- Kasich Praises Unions, Says 'Right to Work' Non-Issue
- House Sees Lengthy Floor Debate over Latest Abortion Bill, Anti-Fraud SNAP Legislation
- Redistricting Panel Hears Further Testimony Bashing Gerrymandering
- Bill Barring Workers' Compensation to Illegal Aliens Gets First Hearing
- Automakers Talk Rollout Timelines, Policy Needs in Driverless Car Hearing
- House Committee Discusses Merits of Piping Materials Bill
- Statehouse Rally Urges Action on Legislation to Reform Payday Loans in Ohio
- New Ohio State Policy Center to Study 'War on Drugs'
- Ohio Earns Solid 'C' in New Report on Pre-Trial Justice
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House Committee Reports

- Aging and Long Term Care
- Community and Family Advancement
- Criminal Justice
- Federalism and Interstate Relations
- Government Accountability and Oversight
- Health
- Higher Education and Workforce Development
- Insurance
- State and Local Government
- Transportation and Public Safety

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From: Michalowski, Joe
Sent: Friday, December 15, 2017 11:38 AM
To: Michalowski, Joe
Subject: Becker Co-sponsor Request: Six Right-to-Work Constitutional Amendments
Attachments: Co-sponsor Request- Six Right-to-Work Constitutional Amendments.pdf

Ohio House of Representatives

Representative John Becker
Ohio's 65th House District

MEMORANDUM

To: GOP House Members
From: Representative John Becker
Date: Friday, December 15, 2017
RE: Co-Sponsor Request: Six Right-to-Work Constitutional Amendments

The following are six separate Right-to-Work related constitutional amendments in no particular sequence. Please join me in co-sponsoring one or more of the below:

1. Private-sector Right-to-Work – No worker should be required to subsidize a union as a condition of employment. Additionally, this will tell the world that Ohio is "open for business."

2. Public-sector Right-to-Work – This is about freedom of association. Like for the private sector, no worker should be required to subsidize a union as a condition of employment.

2. Public-sector Prevailing Wage – Repeals the requirement for taxpayers to pay artificially inflated wages, rather than those that are market-based.

3. Public-sector Paycheck Protection – This prohibits state and local government employers from withholding union dues or fees from workers' wages. Additionally, unions will be prohibited from spending workers' money on political activities without workers' consent.

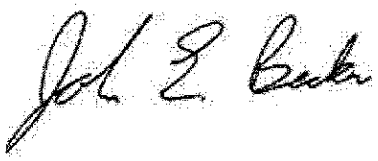
4. Public-sector Project Labor Agreements – This is the Michigan model approved by the US Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. State and local government entities will be prohibited from engaging in contracts that minimize competition for construction projects by requiring that only union or non-union labor can be considered. A level playing field will be required.

5. Public-sector Union Recertification – Requires annual reconsideration and recertification of workers' bargaining units. This will open up competition for new bargaining units, will give workers a chance to have their voices heard, and will make union leadership accountable to their membership.

These proposals simply ask the General Assembly to put them on the ballot for the people to vote on them individually. Twenty-eight states and four out of five of Ohio's neighboring states have enacted Right-to-Work laws. Clearly, the nation's future is for all workers to have the right to work free of the burden of mandated union payments as a condition of employment. Ohio is being left behind, and it is time for the people to decide Ohio's future.

If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation or have any questions, please contact Joe Michalowski at (614) 466-8134 or joe.michalowski@ohiohouse.gov. Please indicate which constitutional amendment(s) you wish to co-sponsor. **The deadline to co-sponsor is Wednesday, December 20, 2017, at 4:00 P.M.**

Thank you for your time and consideration of this legislation.



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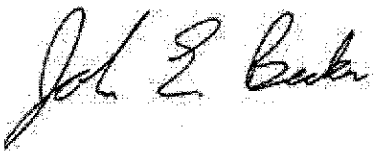
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John Becker
State Representative
65th House District

From: report@hannah.com
Sent: Monday, December 18, 2017 6:30 PM
To: DL_Hannah
Subject: Hannah News Stories for Monday, December 18, 2017

Monday, December 18, 2017

IN TODAY'S HANNAH REPORT:

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Today's Stories

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From: Westlake, Libby
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 8:39 AM
To: Westlake, Libby
Subject: E-Clips for 12/20/2017

HOUSE E-CLIPS

12/20/2017

The Columbus Dispatch
Ohio's Greatest Online Newspaper

REPORT SUGGESTS STATE AGENCY ALREADY HAS VIOLATED NEW CONTRACTING POLICY

After The Dispatch revealed the Ohio Department of Administrative Services awarded $15 million in unbid contracts to favored information-technology consultants, the agency promised to clean up its act.

NEW WHALEY AD PRAISES WORK, PROMISES JOBS

Dayton Mayor Nan Whaley has released a new internet ad touting the dignity of work as she seeks the Democratic nomination for governor.

Dayton Daily News
www.daytondailynews.com

LEHNER'S BILL AIMS TO CHANGE OHIO TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM

The Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) could see significant changes if a bill recently introduced by State Sen. Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering) becomes law.

STATE SENATOR TO RUN FOR MIAMI COUNTY COMMISSION

State Sen. Bill Beagle (R-Tipp City) today delcared his candidacy for a seat on the Miami County Commission.

THE ENQUIRER

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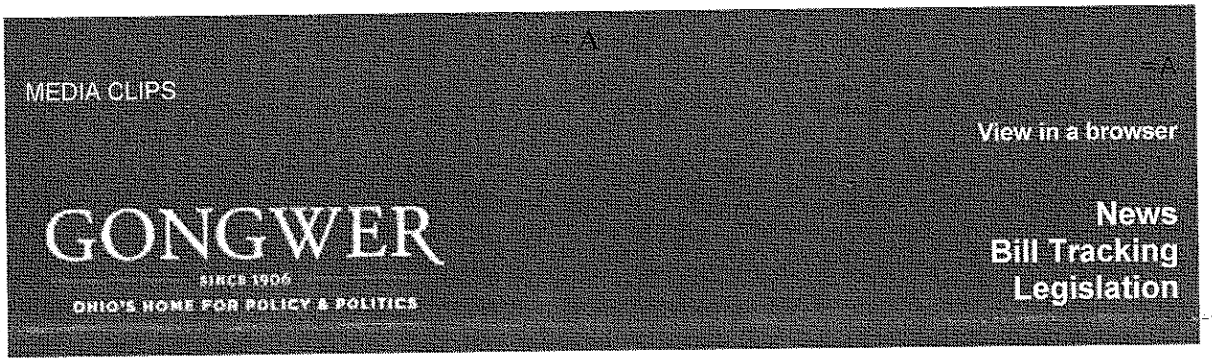
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From: Gongwer News Service
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 8:42 AM
To: DL_Gongwer
Subject: Ohio Media Clips, Wednesday, December 20

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NEWS

Federal judge dismisses legal effort to stop gas pipeline (Associated Press, 12/20/2017)

Ohio attorney general not joining legal fight over net neutrality (Associated Press, 12/20/2017)

'Right to work' in Ohio? Becker wants voters to choose (Cincinnati Enquirer, 12/20/2017)

Your tax bill savings might not be as big as advertised. The economic development benefits might not be, either (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 12/20/2017)

New Whaley ad praises work, promises jobs (Columbus Dispatch, 12/20/2017)

Report suggests state agency already has violated new contracting policy (Columbus Dispatch, 12/20/2017)

Stivers announces net neutrality bill (Columbus Dispatch, 12/20/2017)

Tax revision almost law; one more vote left (Columbus Dispatch, 12/20/2017)

Lehner's bill aims to change Ohio teacher evaluation system (Dayton Daily News, 12/20/2017)

Report: Ohio cities facing fiscal stress despite improving economy (Dayton Daily News, 12/20/2017)

Senate passes GOP tax bill; House to revote Wednesday (Dayton Daily News, 12/20/2017)

EDITORIALS

Editorial: 2012 effort a dog of a law (Columbus Dispatch, 12/20/2017)

Editorial: Truth and news under assault (Columbus Dispatch, 12/20/2017)

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=A

From: Michalowski, Joe
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 2:43 PM
To: Michalowski, Joe
CC: Basie, Margaret
Subject: Becker & Riedel REVISED Co-sponsor Request: Six Right-to-Work Constitutional Amendments
Attachments: Becker & Riedel Co-sponsor Request- Six Right-to-Work Constitutional Amendments.pdf

Importance: High

Representative Craig S. Riedel
has signed on to all six of these constitutional amendments as a joint sponsor with Rep. Becker.
Each of the six amendments would appear on Ohio's general election ballot on November 3, 2020.
The current co-sponsors of all six are: Rep. Thompson, Rep. Brinkman, Rep. Dean, Rep. Keller, Rep. Roegner, and Rep. Zeltwanger.
Rep. Lang is a co-sponsor on the following constitutional amendments: private-sector right-to-work (amendment #1); public-sector prevailing wage (amendment #3); and public-

sector project labor agreements (amendment #5).

Rep. Vitale is a co-sponsor on public-sector right-to-work (amendment #2).

Revised deadline to co-sponsor is TODAY at 5:00 PM. Please note which constitutional amendment(s) you wish to co-sponsor.

Ohio House of Representatives

Representative John Becker
Ohio's 65th House District

Representative Craig S. Riedel
Ohio's 82nd House District

MEMORANDUM

To: GOP House Members
From: Representative John Becker and Representative Craig S. Riedel
Date: Wednesday, December 20, 2017
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6. Public-sector Union Recertification – Requires annual reconsideration and recertification of workers' bargaining units. This will open up competition for new bargaining units, will give workers a chance to have their voices heard, and will make union leadership accountable to their membership.

These proposals simply ask the General Assembly to put them on the ballot for the people to vote on them individually. Twenty-eight states and four out of five of Ohio's neighboring states have enacted Right-to-Work laws. Clearly, the nation's future is for all workers to have the right to work free of the burden of mandated union payments as a condition of employment. Ohio is being left behind, and it is time for the people to decide Ohio's future.

If you would like to co-sponsor this legislation or have any questions, please contact Joe Michalowski at (614) 466-8134 or joe.michalowski@ohiohouse.gov. Please indicate which constitutional amendment(s) you wish to co-sponsor. **The deadline to co-sponsor is TODAY- Wednesday, December 20, 2017, at 4:00 P.M.**

Thank you for your time and consideration of this legislation.



John Becker Craig S. Riedel
State Representative State Representative
65th House District 82nd House District

Ohio House of Representatives

Representative John Becker
Ohio's 65th House District

Representative Craig S. Riedel
Ohio's 82nd House District

MEMORANDUM

To: **GOP House Members**
From: **Representative John Becker and Representative Craig S. Riedel**
Date: **Wednesday, December 20, 2017**
RE: **REVISED Co-Sponsor Request: Six Right-to-Work Constitutional Amendments**

The following are six separate Right-to-Work related constitutional amendments in no particular sequence. Please join me in co-sponsoring one or more of the below:

1. Private-sector Right-to-Work – No worker should be required to subsidize a union as a condition of employment. Additionally, this will tell the world that Ohio is "open for business."

2. Public-sector Right-to-Work – This is about freedom of association. Like for the private sector, no worker should be required to subsidize a union as a condition of employment.

3. Public-sector Prevailing Wage – Repeals the requirement for taxpayers to pay artificially inflated wages, rather than those that are market-based.

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John Becker
State Representative
65th House District

Craig S. Riedel
State Representative
82nd House District

From: Michalowski, Joe
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 2:43 PM
To: Michalowski, Joe
CC: Basie, Margaret
Subject: Becker & Riedel REVISED Co-sponsor Request: Six Right-to-Work Constitutional Amendments
Attachments: Becker & Riedel Co-sponsor Request- Six Right-to-Work Constitutional Amendments.pdf

Importance: High

Representative Craig S. Riedel
has signed on to all six of these constitutional amendments as a joint sponsor with Rep. Becker.
Each of the six amendments would appear on Ohio's general election ballot on November 3, 2020.
The current co-sponsors of all six are: Rep. Thompson, Rep. Brinkman, Rep. Dean, Rep. Keller, Rep. Roegner, and Rep. Zeltwanger.
Rep. Lang is a co-sponsor on the following constitutional amendments: private-sector right-to-work (amendment #1); public-sector prevailing wage (amendment #3); and public-

sector project labor agreements (amendment #5).

Rep. Vitale is a co-sponsor on public-sector right-to-work (amendment #2).

Revised deadline to co-sponsor is TODAY at 5:00 PM. Please note which constitutional amendment(s) you wish to co-sponsor.

Ohio House of Representatives

Representative John Becker
Ohio's 65th House District

Representative Craig S. Riedel
Ohio's 82nd House District

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State Representative
65th House District

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State Representative
82nd House District

Ohio House of Representatives

Representative John Becker
Ohio's 65th House District

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Ohio's 82nd House District

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John Becker
State Representative
65th House District

Craig S. Riedel
State Representative
82nd House District

From: Gongwer News Service
Sent: Thursday, December 21, 2017 6:04 PM
To: DL_Gongwer
Subject: Ohio Report, Thursday, December 21, 2017
Attachments: Dec21House.htm; Dec21Senate.htm; 171221dayplan.htm; Dec21.htm

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OHIO REPORT
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21

Speaker Tasks Universities With Engaging High Schoolers Impacted By Opiate Epidemic

Right-To-Work, Prevailing Wage Proposals Unveiled In House

Children Services Agencies See Growing Burden From Drug Crisis; Overdose Deaths Tallied

House Republican Announces Plan To Crack Down Drug Dealers

'Significant Update' On Belmont County Ethane Cracker Slated For 2018

Federal Judge Dismisses Property Owners' Lawsuit Against Nexus Pipeline

Groups Highlight Economic Impacts Of 'Dreamers' In Push To Restore DACA

High Court Green Lights Tax Board To Take Up $500K NASCAR Appeal

Poll Finds Democrats With Big Lead In Generic Congressional Ballots; Bacon Touts Fundraising; Scott Officially Enters District 12 Race...

ACTIVITY REPORTS

House

Senate

CALENDARS

Day Planner

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House Activity for Thursday, December 21, 2017

INTRODUCED

HJR 7 — **UNION MEMBERSHIP** (Becker, J., Riedel, C.) Proposing to enact Section 22 of Article I of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to prohibit laws, rules, and agreements that require employees of public sector employers to join or pay dues to an employee organization and to prohibit employee organizations from representing nonmember public sector employees in employment-related matters.
Gongwer Coverage

HJR 8 — **UNION MEMBERSHIP** (Becker, J., Riedel, C.) Proposing to enact Section 22 of Article I of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to prohibit laws, rules, and agreements that require employees of private sector employers to join or pay dues to an employee organization and to prohibit employee organizations from representing nonmember private sector employees in employment-related matters.
Gongwer Coverage

HJR 9 — **PREVAILING WAGE** (Becker, J., Riedel, C.) Proposing to enact Section 43 of Article II of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to prohibit a public authority from requiring a contractor on a public improvement to pay the contractor's workers the prevailing rate of wages for work performed on the public improvement.
Gongwer Coverage

HJR 10 — **PROJECT LABOR AGREEMENTS** (Becker, J., Riedel, C.) Proposing to enact Section 2 of Article XV of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to prohibit certain requirements or prohibitions regarding labor agreements in government contracts.
Gongwer Coverage

HJR 11 — **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING** (Becker, J., Riedel, C.) Proposing to enact Section 12 of Article XV of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to subject any public employee collective bargaining representative to an annual election to remain certified as the exclusive representative.
Gongwer Coverage

HJR 12 **UNION DUES** (**Becker, J.**, **Riedel, C.**) Proposing to enact Section 12 of Article XV of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to prohibit dues and other fees payable to an employee organization from being deducted from the payroll check of a public employee and to prohibit those dues and fees from being used for political purposes unless authorized by the public employee. **Gongwer Coverage**

HB 454 **CEMETERY LOTS** (**Patterson, J.**, **Arndt, S.**) To require a township to compensate the owner of certain unused cemetery lots and rights which the township reenters after lack of response from the owner. Am. 517.073

17 S. High St., Suite 630
Columbus Ohio 43215
Phone: 614-221-1992 | **Fax:** 614-221-7844 | **Email:** gongwer@gongwer-oh.com

Scott Miller, President | Kent Cahlander, Editor | Melissa Dilley, Mike Livingston, Dustin Ensinger, Jon Reed, Staff Writers

Click the after a bill number to create a saved search and email alert for that bill.

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Senate Activity for Thursday, December 21, 2017

INTRODUCED

SB 246 **STUDENT REMOVAL** (Lehner, P., Manning, G.) To enact the "SAFE Act" to revise the procedures for emergency removal of a student, to prohibit certain suspensions and expulsions of students in grades pre- kindergarten through three, to require each public school to implement a positive behavior intervention and supports framework in accordance with state standards, and to make an appropriation. Am. 3302.03, 3313.534, 3313.66, 3313.661, 3313.668, and 3319.46 and to enact section 3319.237

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Daily Activity Planner for Friday, December 22

Legislative Committees

No legislative committees scheduled.

Agency Calendar

No agency meetings scheduled.

Event Planner

No events scheduled.

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Volume #86, Report #245 -- Thursday, December 21, 2017

Speaker Tasks Universities With Engaging High Schoolers Impacted By Opiate Epidemic

University presidents are coming together to devise strategies for reaching out to youth impacted by the opiate epidemic.

They're doing so at the request of Speaker Cliff Rosenberger (R-Clarksville), who said he was recently inspired by a group of Waverly City Schools students impacted by addiction.

Many students in that district live with someone other than their parents and lack access to role models who can highlight life skills and opportunities to grow, he said in a recent column.



Speaker Rosenberger

Speaker Rosenberger said he believes universities can serve as the sources of those mentors.

"It's our communities who are going to help us in the drug epidemic, so how can we get college students to be those big brothers and sisters and give them some credit maybe for service-oriented things," he told reporters last week.

Another facet of his charge to universities is to consider how at-risk high school students can volunteer to earn credits toward college tuition, he said.

"Maybe they earn some credit or some dollars toward college credit so that they can have some ability to go out and do something," Speaker Rosenberger said.

Because reaching out to underserved populations dealing with the opiate crisis will be a priority for the legislature in 2018, he said he's eyeing legislation that would implement such mentorship and volunteer programs statewide. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, December 15, 2017)

University presidents began brainstorming immediately after meeting with the speaker earlier this month and will come back together in January to decide which ideas should be proposed, said Bruce Johnson, president of the Inter-University Council of Ohio.

Institutions have an essential role in the state's ongoing fight against opioids, he said, pointing to research that shows Ohioans with college degrees are 14 times less likely to die of overdoses than those who have only high school diplomas.

"One of the fundamental ways to attack opiate abuse in the state is to have a higher percentage of people in the state obtain a higher education," Mr. Johnson said.

"Students, particularly in hard-to-reach areas of the state, having mentors would help them manage their way through the difficulties and find their way to a public university," he added.

In areas of the state where the opiate epidemic has hit hardest, encouraging students to want to go to college is key because they often don't see higher education as a potential pathway, Mr. Johnson said.

"I think the thing that's really going to give students hope is a pathway which involves access to higher education," he said.

For that reason, it's possible the forthcoming plan will propose financial assistance for high school students who participate in a mentorship program and can show perseverance, Mr. Johnson said.

"Earning your way toward a college scholarship would be a great use of the state's resources," he said.

Any legislative proposals that come from the president's recommendations would be in addition to what universities are already doing on the opiate front, he said. Each university has undertaken initiatives to address the issue.

At Ohio University, low-income patients with substance abuse issues can receive free or low-cost treatment and drug dependent mothers-to-be are eligible for access to medication-assisted treatment programs, obstetrical care, social service benefits and other services. Similar services are provided at other university hospitals throughout the state.

Meanwhile, University of Akron is looking to help students who may be dealing with addiction by working with community agencies to develop supports and programming.

In the research realm, the University of Cincinnati recently received a $1.5 million Third Frontier grant aimed at the epidemic. That total is in addition to $32 million in research funding that's been awarded to the university to be put toward the cause.

Other universities are offering up their own dollars in an effort to find innovative solutions to the state's drug problem. The new Opioid Innovation Fund at Ohio State University will provide $1 million in grants to public-private partnerships that develop programs or technologies to reduce the burden of the opiate crisis.

Right-To-Work, Prevailing Wage Proposals Unveiled In House

A slate of ballot proposals targeting labor laws was introduced Thursday in the House, drawing immediate pushback from one of the state's largest union groups.

The six joint resolutions from Rep. John Becker (R-Union Twp.) and Rep. Craig Riedel (R-Defiance) would ban mandatory union dues for both public and private employees, limit prevailing wage and make other changes guaranteed to spark protests among Ohio's unions.

If passed by lawmakers, the issues would be placed on the 2020 ballot for voters to weigh in, according to Rep. Becker. He said he chose the resolution route after his prior legislative efforts went nowhere.

"It has to do with making Ohio more competitive," Rep. Becker said in an interview. "Currently, Ohio is being left behind. Four out of five of Ohio's neighboring states are right to work. With 28 (right-to-work) states in the union, the trend is clearly in that direction."

Two of the resolutions (HJR 7 & HJR 8) would ban any laws, rules or agreements requiring public and private sector employees to join or pay union dues. They would also prohibit unions from representing non-members in employment-related matters.

Other resolutions would:

- Prevent a public authority from requiring a contractor on a public improvement project to pay workers the prevailing rate of wages (HJR 9).
- Forbid certain requirements or prohibitions regarding labor agreements in government contracts (HJR 10).
- Subject any public employee collective bargaining representative to an annual election to remain certified as the exclusive representative (HJR 11).
- Prohibit dues and other fees from being deducted from the payroll check of a public employee and prohibit those fees from being used for political purposes unless authorized by the employee (HJR 12).

Along with Messrs. Becker and Riedel, nine other representatives have signed on as cosponsors of one or more of the resolutions.

Rep. Becker said Republican leaders, House Speaker candidates and Republican gubernatorial candidates have all told him the same thing: If Ohio is to become a right-to-work state, it needs to be a decision driven by voters.

"They've all got this one consistent theme: the voters have to decide," Rep. Becker said. "I'm taking them at their word and saying fine, let's move forward with that. That's what these resolutions would do. They go on the ballot for people to decide."

Brad Miller, a spokesman for House Speaker Cliff Rosenberger (R-Clarksville), said the speaker will review the proposals.

"The issue of right-to-work has been brought forward numerous times in recent years, and it always generates an important and interesting discussion amongst the caucus," Mr. Miller said. "Since Rep. Becker's resolution was introduced just today, Speaker Rosenberger will review the legislation and will seek input from caucus members before any potential future actions are determined."

Tim Burga, president of the Ohio AFL-CIO, said that neither employers nor employees in Ohio are seeking these changes.

"These proposals are a frontal assault on workers," Mr. Burga said. "It does three things: It takes away rights at work, it drives down wages, and it strips workers of their political beliefs. It's really policies that attack the foundation of what's been a catalyst to create Ohio's working class."

Ohio House Democrats will likewise fight the proposals should they gain traction, with Minority Leader Fred Strahorn (D-Dayton) calling them "dangerous, divisive bills."

"Taxpayers expect us to work together to increase opportunity and create jobs with wages and benefits that can sustain a family," Rep. Strahorn said. "These anti-worker, anti-family restrictions will do the exact opposite."

Opponents point to the public's rejection of 2011's Senate Bill 5 - in which voters voted 62-38% to repeal a law that limited collective bargaining for public employees - as evidence that Ohioans don't support such a move. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, November 8, 2011)

For that reason, Gov. John Kasich, commenting on prior right-to-work legislation from Rep. Becker and others, has said right-to-work is "not on my agenda."

But Rep. Becker contends that SB5 (129th General Assembly) wasn't truly a right-to-work bill was but more focused on strikes, benefits and union negotiations. In his view, voters haven't weighed in on the issue since 1958 when voters by a 63-36% margin rejected a right-to-work amendment.

Rep. Becker said he approached Rep. Ryan Smith (R-Bidwell) and Rep. Larry Householder (R-Glenford) about supporting the resolutions but neither has signed on at this point as a cosponsor. Both men are vying to succeed Rep. Rosenberger as speaker.

But the sponsor said he believes the measures would have support in the caucus.

"In conversations with plenty of other colleagues beyond those nine (cosponsors) it's a whole lot of, 'We don't want to go on record with it' or 'we want to see which direction it goes,'" Rep. Becker said. "They just don't want to be in front of it right out of the gate. There's a lot of support, it's just not necessarily public."

Mr. Burga, though, said the proposals are a "political assault authored by out-of-state interests."

"It's never a good time to introduce bad policy but again this is an extreme measure without a constituency," Mr. Burga said. "I would say Ohioans deserve better than this. Just like on Senate Bill 5, we will fight these proposals and encourage legislators to work together to find common ground to create jobs and raise wages."

Children Services Agencies See Growing Burden From Drug Crisis; Overdose Deaths Tallied

The opiate epidemic continues to put a strain on Ohio's foster care system, with a thousand more kids expected to spend the holidays in foster care this year compared to 2016, a report released Thursday found.

The Public Children Services Association of Ohio said the drug problem is driving a dramatic surge in demand for foster care, with the number of children in agency custody rising from 12,654 in July 2013 to 15,145 last July.

At this rate, the state would reach 20,000 kids in care by 2020, with the cost of placing them in foster homes and residential facilities rising to more than $500 million per year.

"We are sounding the alarm now - we need help," PCSAO Executive Director Angela Sausser said in a statement. "We need substantially more state resources before we lose the ability to provide essential services to vulnerable children."

The data indicate increasing rates of growth in the number of children in care, with the total rising from 15,145 on July 1 to more than 15,500 on Oct. 1.

The association pointed to some help it received from the legislature in the budget bill (HB 49), an additional $15 million. Yet foster care placement costs have increased by about $45 million since last year, not counting staffing or other agency services, the group said.

"Ohio needs a long-term solution to this crisis - and leadership to get us there before agency budgets collapse and our workforce jumps ship," Ms. Sausser said. "We already have a lack of available foster homes in Ohio. With the projected increases, we will have children sleeping in county agency lobbies with no available foster family to take them in."

Other state efforts include work by Attorney General Mike DeWine's office including a 14-county pilot project designed to help families affected by parental opioid abuse. (See

Gongwer Ohio Report, March 24, 2017) Another effort by the AG's office provides more funding for children services agencies to boost the number of foster families available. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, December 20, 2017)

Ms. Sausser pointed to work in California, where that state is realigning services along a continuum of care.

The increase in placements, she said, doesn't include the number of children placed with relatives.

"Placing abused and neglected children with kin leads to better long-term outcomes and is far less costly to government, but it means that grandparents on fixed incomes and aunts with kids of their own must find a way to pay for food, clothes, child care and other expenses," she said. "The legislature stepped up again and provided $15 million a year in federal funds to create child care assistance for kinship families. However, that program has been delayed."

Overdose Totals: In a related development, new data released by the federal government show Ohio with the second-highest rate of drug overdose deaths in the country at 39.1 per 100,000 in 2016.

The numbers released by the National Center for Health Statistics showed Ohio with 4,329 overdose deaths last year, up from the 4,050 reported by the Department of Health in August. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, August 30, 2017)

Ohio's overdose total was exceeded only by those of Pennsylvania, California and Florida.

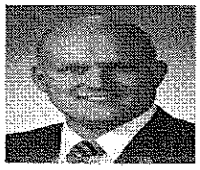
In terms of the death rate, Ohio's 39.1 per 100,000 ranked behind only West Virginia, which had a rate of 52. New Hampshire was at 39.0, the District of Columbia at 38.8 and Pennsylvania at 37.9.

National totals showed a continued increase in deaths from heroin and other opioids, coupled with a dramatic surge in the number of deaths from synthetic opioids other than methadone. Those deaths totaled 3,105, or 1 per 100,000, in 2013, but rose to more than 19,000, or a rate of 6.2, in 2016.

House Republican Announces Plan To Crack Down Drug Dealers

Drug dealers in Ohio could face much stiffer penalties under a proposal unveiled Thursday.

Rep. Scott Wiggam (R-Wooster) announced plans to introduce legislation that would boost trafficking charges for all Schedule I and Schedule II substances, with the exception of marijuana, to a minimum third-degree felony that carries a mandatory prison term.



Scott Wiggam

"No longer will drug dealers be able to operate in this state with little fear for the law," Rep. Wiggam said during a Statehouse news conference.

While the lawmaker praised the state's effort to combat the drug epidemic, including $180 million in the two-year budget (HB 49), he said deterrence and accountability are missing, and hopes his bill will provide those two components to the fight.

Over the past four years, he said, overdose deaths have skyrocketed by 212%, while traffickers going to prison fell by 4% over that same time period.

"Ohio's law is too weak to deter drug traffickers from continuing to flood our streets with their products," he said. "Law enforcement officers have grown weary and demoralized from arresting the same criminals for drug trafficking only to see them released into our society with little more than a slap on the wrist."

Wayne County Prosecutor Dan Lutz voiced that frustration. He said a trafficker in his county was recently arrested after knowingly selling heroin mixed with fentanyl that led to a user's overdose death. Among the charges his office brought was involuntary manslaughter, which was later amended to reckless homicide.

Nonetheless, Mr. Lutz said the judge in the case was not pleased with the man being charged for the death of the user and told defense counsel to seek a bench trial, which they did. The individual was eventually found guilty of a single drug trafficking charge.

"Amazingly, he sentenced him to only probation," Mr. Lutz said, adding the man went right back to selling heroin.

The bill will not differentiate between those who are trafficking large amounts of drugs for profit and those who are selling small amounts to support a habit. Mr. Lutz said both are killing people by selling deadly drugs.

"We want to deter that," he said. "We want to make it too costly to do that."

Despite the bill treating addicts and large-scale traffickers the same, Rep. Wiggam said it does not take away from changes in law in recent years that have sought to treat those two groups of individuals differently in the criminal justice system.

"If you are an addict and you are selling, you are still engaged in selling," he said.

As for the impact on the state's prison population, Rep. Wiggam said he is unsure exactly how his legislation will impact the numbers. He added that the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction has yet to take a position on the bill.

But Mr. Lutz said when discussing the state's prison population, the cost-benefit analysis does not take into account the cost savings from not having people on the streets "wreaking havoc."

"Some people need to be locked up in prisons, and these are those people," he said.

Asked about the philosophy of some in the law enforcement community, including Attorney General Mike DeWine, who has repeatedly said the state cannot "arrest its way out" of the drug problem, Mr. Lutz said that attitude needs to change.

"We've got to prevent people from getting on this stuff in the first place," he said.

Mike Brem, president of the Ohio Task Force Commanders Association, likened the battle against opioids to the fight against crack.

"We feel this penalty increase will deter drug traffickers as it did the same way with the crack epidemic in the 80's," he said.

The legislation, dubbed the "Drug Trafficking Deterrence Act," has 18 co-sponsors, according to Rep. Wiggam.

The bill also has the backing of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association, the Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association, the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police and the OTFCA, Rep. Wiggam said.

'Significant Update' On Belmont County Ethane Cracker Slated For 2018

A Thai petrochemical company now says it will have news on whether it plans to move forward with a proposed world-class ethane cracker plant sometime after the new year.

PTT Global, Gov. John Kasich and JobsOhio leaders in 2015 announced at a Statehouse press conference that the company - Thailand's largest petrochemical and refining company - was eyeing Belmont County for the $6 billion plant. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, April 22, 2015)

A final investment decision was initially expected in 2016 but was then pushed to 2017. Last February, the company announced it would postpone a final decision until late 2017 but with January drawing near the lack of recent news has kept locals hoping for an announcement in suspense. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, February 17, 2017)

On Thursday, the company foreshadowed a "significant update" sometime early next year.

"PTTGC America will have a significant update that will demonstrate momentum for this project early in 2018," the company said. "We thank all Ohio and Belmont County partners for their support, and we wish you a happy holiday season."

The last news of the project came in October, when JobsOhio and PTT representatives met in Washington D.C. to ink a memorandum of understanding. In the MOU, the parties agreed to establish a community infrastructure development plan after a final investment decision has been reached. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, October 6, 2017)

Asked about the project's status, JobsOhio spokesman Matt Englehart said talks are ongoing.

"While a final investment decision has not yet been made, PTTGCA continues to collaborate with JobsOhio and local partners while investing time and resources to move this project forward," he said.

JobsOhio and the Kasich administration have touted the potential project as a boon for region that will draw in jobs and economic revitalization.

The company had committed to a $100 million investment as it considers the move and earlier this year purchased 168 acres from FirstEnergy for the site to the tune of $13.8 million.

Despite that, the potential development of similar plants in nearby West Virginia and Pennsylvania subsequent to PTT's 2015 announcement has sparked speculation from those not involved in the talks regarding the Belmont County project's future.

Federal Judge Dismisses Property Owners' Lawsuit Against Nexus Pipeline

A federal district court judge has tossed out a lawsuit from dozens of Ohio property owners seeking to halt work on the Nexus Pipeline.

But it's hardly the only lawsuit targeting the construction of the $2 billion, 255-mile natural gas pipeline that's yet to be resolved.

In May, 39 households - comprising 65 individuals - sued the company and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in an effort to halt the project.

The property owners said the company is improperly using eminent domain and argued FERC has failed to provide adequate information to homeowners regarding their options. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, May 15, 2017)

A magistrate in August issued a recommendation that the court deny plaintiffs' motion, opining that without formal FERC approval the court lacks adequate jurisdiction. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, August 8, 2017)

Weeks later, FERC approved the project, which Nexus argued in court filings made the lawsuit moot. Construction was then authorized to begin in October after several preconstruction conditions were met. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, October 13, 2017)

Judge John Adams agreed with the magistrate and his ruling this week from the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio adopts the magistrate's prior recommendation in its entirety.

Plaintiffs may now appeal to the U.S. Sixth Circuit court of Appeals. That's the same court that late last month voted 2-1 to stay construction on an eight-mile stretch of the pipeline through the city of Green. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, November 27, 2017)

Green is one of several localities - with others including Oberlin, Bowling Green and Medina - that have protested the project.

Green's lawsuit argues the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency granted the project a 401 certification improperly because the agency was not provided with practicable alternative routes with a smaller adverse environmental impact.

Sierra Club had also sued FERC over the pipeline's status, pressing D.C. circuit court to require FERC to rehear the case. But the group was forced to petition for the case to be dismissed after the landowner at the heart of the complaint agreed to sell land to Nexus for the project.

Groups Highlight Economic Impacts Of 'Dreamers' In Push To Restore DACA

If Congress doesn't act to continue the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, Ohio could lose out on as much as $12 million per year in tax revenue, according to a new report.

That total is how much the 9,000 Ohioans who are eligible for the program are currently paying in taxes, Policy Matters Ohio reported Thursday. All would be lost, however, if the protections for immigrants who are working and attending school are eliminated and those so-called Dreamers are deported.

If those same individuals stay in the state without DACA, many would likely take on lower-wage jobs, resulting in an estimated $5 million tax revenue loss, the think tank said. About 4,000 Ohioans are actually participating in the program.

"Allowing DACA protections to expire would really hurt Ohio but passage of a Dream Act could boost out long-term economic output," Daniel Ortiz, outreach coordinator for Policy Matters Ohio, said in a conference call with reporters.

If Congress acts to reauthorize the program that was nixed by the Trump Administration in September, the state's gross domestic product could see a long-term annual impact of $92 million, Mr. Ortiz said, citing Center for American Progress estimates.

Ohio's GDP could increase by more than $300 million annually if half the eligible Dreamers earn college degrees to obtain permanent residence, he said.

"The Dream Act would put these young immigrants on a path to pay their taxes like everyone else and really could facilitate open participation in our communities," Mr. Ortiz said.

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Cleveland) has said he's working with Republicans on a bill that would continue protections for the children of illegal immigrants, however those who are impacted by and supportive of the program say Congress can't move quick enough. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, December 20, 2017)

If a continuation or replacement isn't approved by March 5, as many as 1,200 Dreamers per day throughout the country will see their DACA authorizations expire, Mr. Ortiz said. Under the administration's plan, those who are currently part of the program will be sheltered until their permits expire or up to two years, whichever comes first.

Elvis Saldias, a DACA recipient who lives in Columbus, said his permit expires in about six months and he's not legally permitted to continue working as a property claims adjustor if his authorization lapses by even one day.

The recent Ohio State University graduate who came to America from Boliva more than 15 years ago said he would also no longer be able to continue mentoring the state's youngest immigrants attending Columbus Global Academy.

"I need to continue doing what I'm doing," he said, adding: "I can't imagine the urgency behind those (whose authorizations) have already expired."

Mr. Saldias told reporters the DACA application process, which includes an extensive background check, takes about five months from start to finish - another reason legislation needs passed as soon as possible.

"If they pass a bill today, it doesn't mean we're going to get our renewed DACA...in the mail," he said.

Lynn Tramonte, Director of America's Voice Ohio, called the DACA rescission a crisis, saying Congress can't wait until it's up against the March deadline to make a decision.

"The deadline was September," when the administration stalled the program, she said on the conference call. "People became ineligible suddenly overnight and were unable to apply. Those qualified for renewal were cut off. It's a crisis and...it has really impacts on everybody's lives."

Calls for quick action are growing louder for DACA to be Congress's next order of business now that it's finalized a tax overhaul and appears headed for a Friday vote on another stop-gap funding bill to prevent a government shutdown.

On Wednesday, Gov. John Kasich joined 10 other governors in asking Congress to quickly find a bipartisan solution to the issue. About 800 colleges and universities in the country, including a handful from Ohio, have also pressed for a resolution. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, December 20, 2017)

U.S. Sen. Portman (R-Terrace Park) has said there is an interest in reinstating DACA into permanent law, but it may come with some parameters, such as a workforce enforcement program.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform, which backed President Trump's longtime plan to end the program and leave its future up to Congress, has also said DACA's recession opens to the door to create a larger immigration strategy that could include building a southern border wall and defunding sanctuary cities.

"Congress should seize this opportunity to come together and forge these much-needed reforms in our nation's immigration policy," the group said in a statement.

High Court Green Lights Tax Board To Take Up $500K NASCAR Appeal

The Board of Tax Appeals erred in dismissing an appeal filed by NASCAR, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled Thursday.

In a 6-1 per curiam decision, the court sided with the Florida-based company by finding that the BTA has jurisdiction to hear an appeal even when the notice is filed by an individual not licensed to practice law in Ohio on behalf of a taxpayer with authorization.

The decision hinged on a 1980 ruling in *Jemo Assoc., Inc. v. Lindley* in which the court found that any authorized agent may file an appeal on behalf of a taxpayer, even if doing so amounts to the unauthorized practice of law, the court's media arm reported.

After conducting an audit for tax years 2005 to 2010, the Department of Taxation in 2012 determined NASCAR failed to pay the Commercial Activity Tax for broadcasting its product in Ohio.

The company was assessed $549,520, but filed a petition for reassessment with the tax commissioner, who affirmed the finding.

NASCAR then took its case to the BTA. But because its notice of appeal was filed by a Florida attorney not licensed to practice in Ohio, the BTA dismissed the case.

The high court, however, found that the BTA was wrong to do so.

"In this case, there appears to be no dispute that NASCAR authorized Bowen to file the notice of appeal to the BTA," the court wrote in its decision. "So under (state law) and *Jemo*, the notice of appeal filed by Bowen properly invoked the BTA's jurisdiction. Therefore, the BTA erred in dismissing NASCAR's appeal for lack of jurisdiction."

Justice Patrick Fischer was the lone dissenting voice in the case. He cited the 1997 high court case of *Sharon Village Ltd. V Licking Cty. Bd. of Revision.* In that case the court found that non-attorneys cannot file property value complaints on behalf of corporate taxpayers.

"I would hold that barring a statutory exception, when an appeal to the BTA is filed by a non-attorney, the non-attorney has engaged in the unauthorized practice of law and the BTA does not, therefore, have jurisdiction to hear the appeal," he wrote. "The nonbinding plurality opinion in *Jemo* does not conclude otherwise, and even if it could be read to do so, in light of *Sharon Village*, it has been superseded. For these reasons, it was neither unreasonable nor unlawful for the BTA to follow *Sharon Village* and its progeny and to not follow *Jemo*."

Poll Finds Democrats With Big Lead In Generic Congressional Ballots; Bacon Touts Fundraising; Scott Officially Enters District 12 Race...

A new poll released jointly Thursday by Morning Consult and POLITICO has ominous signs for Republicans heading into 2018.

The poll found that Democrats hold a 10-point lead over Republicans on generic midterm ballots, with 44% respondents indicating they would vote for a Democrat in November compared with 34% who said the same about a Republican.

That is an increase from the prior week when 41% of respondents said they would vote for the Democratic candidate. Republicans polled at 36% last week.

The poll also recorded the highest "wrong direction" mark since mid-October, with 63% of respondents saying they believe the country is headed in the wrong direction.

Another finding was that Republicans may be on the wrong side of the net neutrality debate, with 49% saying that repeal was the wrong decision and just 21% saying it was the right decision.

One of the few bright spots for Republicans in the poll is that enthusiasm is higher on their side, with 64% saying they are motivated to vote in 2018, compared to 56% of Democrats.

Fundraising Numbers: Sen. Kevin Bacon (R-Minerva Park) took to Twitter Thursday to tout fundraising numbers for his bid to replace U.S. Rep. Pat Tiberi (R-Galena).

"Great fundraising results this week! We have $120,000.00 in commitments and we begin collecting them Jan 2," he wrote.

Scott Announcement: On the Democratic of the 12th Congressional District Race, former Franklin County Sheriff Zach Scott formally announced his candidacy for the seat.

"I'm proud of the service and peace of mind I have provided to victims and their families over the past thirty years. Making communities safer by putting dangerous criminals behind bars while helping countless nonviolent offenders get their lives back on track hasn't just been my job - it's been my passion," he said.

"Now I'm going to take that same passion to Congress, where I will get laws passed that put our families and our communities first. Unfortunately, we have all seen too many Washington politicians who are more concerned with serving themselves than serving the public. All too often, Congress caters to powerful special interest groups while the pressing needs of everyday working families fall through the cracks."

Opioid Crisis: In light of a lawsuit filed against the pharmaceutical industry by Summit County and a report showing overdose deaths in Ohio increased by 24% in 2016, Rep. Tavia Galonski (D-Akron) called on drug manufacturers to take responsibility for their role in the opioid epidemic.

"Ohio's opioid epidemic is the result of a myriad of issues," she said. "The key players need to be held accountable and unfortunately, one of the largest is the pharmaceutical industry. By not being clear about the addictive properties of opioids, they have put Ohioans at risk for addiction. I believe this lawsuit is an excellent response to help hard working families needing a helping hand."

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House Activity for Thursday, December 21, 2017

INTRODUCED

HJR 7 — **UNION MEMBERSHIP** (Becker, J., Riedel, C.) Proposing to enact Section 22 of Article I of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to prohibit laws, rules, and agreements that require employees of public sector employers to join or pay dues to an employee organization and to prohibit employee organizations from representing nonmember public sector employees in employment-related matters.
Gongwer Coverage

HJR 8 — **UNION MEMBERSHIP** (Becker, J., Riedel, C.) Proposing to enact Section 22 of Article I of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to prohibit laws, rules, and agreements that require employees of private sector employers to join or pay dues to an employee organization and to prohibit employee organizations from representing nonmember private sector employees in employment-related matters.
Gongwer Coverage

HJR 9 — **PREVAILING WAGE** (Becker, J., Riedel, C.) Proposing to enact Section 43 of Article II of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to prohibit a public authority from requiring a contractor on a public improvement to pay the contractor's workers the prevailing rate of wages for work performed on the public improvement.
Gongwer Coverage

HJR 10 — **PROJECT LABOR AGREEMENTS** (Becker, J., Riedel, C.) Proposing to enact Section 2 of Article XV of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to prohibit certain requirements or prohibitions regarding labor agreements in government contracts.
Gongwer Coverage

HJR 11 — **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING** (Becker, J., Riedel, C.) Proposing to enact Section 12 of Article XV of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to subject any public employee collective bargaining representative to an annual election to remain certified as the exclusive representative.
Gongwer Coverage

HJR 12 — **UNION DUES** (Becker, J., Riedel, C.) Proposing to enact Section 12 of Article XV of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to prohibit dues and other fees payable to an employee organization from being deducted from the payroll check of a public employee and to prohibit those dues and fees from being used for political purposes unless authorized by the public employee. **Gongwer Coverage**

HB 454 — **CEMETERY LOTS** (Patterson, J., Arndt, S.) To require a township to compensate the owner of certain unused cemetery lots and rights which the township reenters after lack of response from the owner. Am. 517.073

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Senate Activity for Thursday, December 21, 2017

INTRODUCED

SB 246 **STUDENT REMOVAL** (Lehner, P., Manning, G.) To enact the "SAFE Act" to revise the procedures for emergency removal of a student, to prohibit certain suspensions and expulsions of students in grades pre- kindergarten through three, to require each public school to implement a positive behavior intervention and supports framework in accordance with state standards, and to make an appropriation. Am. 3302.03, 3313.534, 3313.66, 3313.661, 3313.668, and 3319.46 and to enact section 3319.237

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Daily Activity Planner for Friday, December 22

Legislative Committees

No legislative committees scheduled.

Agency Calendar

No agency meetings scheduled.

Event Planner

No events scheduled.

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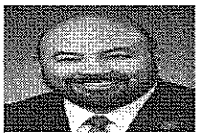
Volume #86, Report #245 -- Thursday, December 21, 2017

Speaker Tasks Universities With Engaging High Schoolers Impacted By Opiate Epidemic

University presidents are coming together to devise strategies for reaching out to youth impacted by the opiate epidemic.

They're doing so at the request of Speaker Cliff Rosenberger (R-Clarksville), who said he was recently inspired by a group of Waverly City Schools students impacted by addiction.

Many students in that district live with someone other than their parents and lack access to role models who can highlight life skills and opportunities to grow, he said in a recent column.



Speaker Rosenberger

Speaker Rosenberger said he believes universities can serve as the sources of those mentors.

"It's our communities who are going to help us in the drug epidemic, so how can we get college students to be those big brothers and sisters and give them some credit maybe for service-oriented things," he told reporters last week.

Another facet of his charge to universities is to consider how at-risk high school students can volunteer to earn credits toward college tuition, he said.

"Maybe they earn some credit or some dollars toward college credit so that they can have some ability to go out and do something," Speaker Rosenberger said.

Because reaching out to underserved populations dealing with the opiate crisis will be a priority for the legislature in 2018, he said he's eyeing legislation that would implement such mentorship and volunteer programs statewide. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, December 15, 2017)

University presidents began brainstorming immediately after meeting with the speaker earlier this month and will come back together in January to decide which ideas should be proposed, said Bruce Johnson, president of the Inter-University Council of Ohio.

Institutions have an essential role in the state's ongoing fight against opioids, he said, pointing to research that shows Ohioans with college degrees are 14 times less likely to die of overdoses than those who have only high school diplomas.

"One of the fundamental ways to attack opiate abuse in the state is to have a higher percentage of people in the state obtain a higher education," Mr. Johnson said.

"Students, particularly in hard-to-reach areas of the state, having mentors would help them manage their way through the difficulties and find their way to a public university," he added.

In areas of the state where the opiate epidemic has hit hardest, encouraging students to want to go to college is key because they often don't see higher education as a potential pathway, Mr. Johnson said.

"I think the thing that's really going to give students hope is a pathway which involves access to higher education," he said.

For that reason, it's possible the forthcoming plan will propose financial assistance for high school students who participate in a mentorship program and can show perseverance, Mr. Johnson said.

"Earning your way toward a college scholarship would be a great use of the state's resources," he said.

Any legislative proposals that come from the president's recommendations would be in addition to what universities are already doing on the opiate front, he said. Each university has undertaken initiatives to address the issue.

At Ohio University, low-income patients with substance abuse issues can receive free or low-cost treatment and drug dependent mothers-to-be are eligible for access to medication-assisted treatment programs, obstetrical care, social service benefits and other services. Similar services are provided at other university hospitals throughout the state.

Meanwhile, University of Akron is looking to help students who may be dealing with addiction by working with community agencies to develop supports and programming.

In the research realm, the University of Cincinnati recently received a $1.5 million Third Frontier grant aimed at the epidemic. That total is in addition to $32 million in research funding that's been awarded to the university to be put toward the cause.

Other universities are offering up their own dollars in an effort to find innovative solutions to the state's drug problem. The new Opioid Innovation Fund at Ohio State University will provide $1 million in grants to public-private partnerships that develop programs or technologies to reduce the burden of the opiate crisis.

Right-To-Work, Prevailing Wage Proposals Unveiled In House

A slate of ballot proposals targeting labor laws was introduced Thursday in the House, drawing immediate pushback from one of the state's largest union groups.

The six joint resolutions from Rep. John Becker (R-Union Twp.) and Rep. Craig Riedel (R-Defiance) would ban mandatory union dues for both public and private employees, limit prevailing wage and make other changes guaranteed to spark protests among Ohio's unions.

If passed by lawmakers, the issues would be placed on the 2020 ballot for voters to weigh in, according to Rep. Becker. He said he chose the resolution route after his prior legislative efforts went nowhere.

"It has to do with making Ohio more competitive," Rep. Becker said in an interview. "Currently, Ohio is being left behind. Four out of five of Ohio's neighboring states are right to work. With 28 (right-to-work) states in the union, the trend is clearly in that direction."

Two of the resolutions (HJR 7 & HJR 8) would ban any laws, rules or agreements requiring public and private sector employees to join or pay union dues. They would also prohibit unions from representing non-members in employment-related matters.

Other resolutions would:

- Prevent a public authority from requiring a contractor on a public improvement project to pay workers the prevailing rate of wages (HJR 9).
- Forbid certain requirements or prohibitions regarding labor agreements in government contracts (HJR 10).
- Subject any public employee collective bargaining representative to an annual election to remain certified as the exclusive representative (HJR 11).
- Prohibit dues and other fees from being deducted from the payroll check of a public employee and prohibit those fees from being used for political purposes unless authorized by the employee (HJR 12).

Along with Messrs. Becker and Riedel, nine other representatives have signed on as cosponsors of one or more of the resolutions.

Rep. Becker said Republican leaders, House Speaker candidates and Republican gubernatorial candidates have all told him the same thing: If Ohio is to become a right-to-work state, it needs to be a decision driven by voters.

"They've all got this one consistent theme: the voters have to decide," Rep. Becker said. "I'm taking them at their word and saying fine, let's move forward with that. That's what these resolutions would do. They go on the ballot for people to decide."

Brad Miller, a spokesman for House Speaker Cliff Rosenberger (R-Clarksville), said the speaker will review the proposals.

"The issue of right-to-work has been brought forward numerous times in recent years, and it always generates an important and interesting discussion amongst the caucus," Mr. Miller said. "Since Rep. Becker's resolution was introduced just today, Speaker Rosenberger will review the legislation and will seek input from caucus members before any potential future actions are determined."

Tim Burga, president of the Ohio AFL-CIO, said that neither employers nor employees in Ohio are seeking these changes.

"These proposals are a frontal assault on workers," Mr. Burga said. "It does three things: It takes away rights at work, it drives down wages, and it strips workers of their political beliefs. It's really policies that attack the foundation of what's been a catalyst to create Ohio's working class."

Ohio House Democrats will likewise fight the proposals should they gain traction, with Minority Leader Fred Strahorn (D-Dayton) calling them "dangerous, divisive bills."

"Taxpayers expect us to work together to increase opportunity and create jobs with wages and benefits that can sustain a family," Rep. Strahorn said. "These anti-worker, anti-family restrictions will do the exact opposite."

Opponents point to the public's rejection of 2011's Senate Bill 5 - in which voters voted 62-38% to repeal a law that limited collective bargaining for public employees - as evidence that Ohioans don't support such a move. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, November 8, 2011)

For that reason, Gov. John Kasich, commenting on prior right-to-work legislation from Rep. Becker and others, has said right-to-work is "not on my agenda."

But Rep. Becker contends that SB5 (129th General Assembly) wasn't truly a right-to-work bill was but more focused on strikes, benefits and union negotiations. In his view, voters haven't weighed in on the issue since 1958 when voters by a 63-36% margin rejected a right-to-work amendment.

Rep. Becker said he approached Rep. Ryan Smith (R-Bidwell) and Rep. Larry Householder (R-Glenford) about supporting the resolutions but neither has signed on at this point as a cosponsor. Both men are vying to succeed Rep. Rosenberger as speaker.

But the sponsor said he believes the measures would have support in the caucus.

"In conversations with plenty of other colleagues beyond those nine (cosponsors) it's a whole lot of, 'We don't want to go on record with it' or 'we want to see which direction it goes,'" Rep. Becker said. "They just don't want to be in front of it right out of the gate. There's a lot of support, it's just not necessarily public."

Mr. Burga, though, said the proposals are a "political assault authored by out-of-state interests."

"It's never a good time to introduce bad policy but again this is an extreme measure without a constituency," Mr. Burga said. "I would say Ohioans deserve better than this. Just like on Senate Bill 5, we will fight these proposals and encourage legislators to work together to find common ground to create jobs and raise wages."

Children Services Agencies See Growing Burden From Drug Crisis; Overdose Deaths Tallied

The opiate epidemic continues to put a strain on Ohio's foster care system, with a thousand more kids expected to spend the holidays in foster care this year compared to 2016, a report released Thursday found.

The Public Children Services Association of Ohio said the drug problem is driving a dramatic surge in demand for foster care, with the number of children in agency custody rising from 12,654 in July 2013 to 15,145 last July.

At this rate, the state would reach 20,000 kids in care by 2020, with the cost of placing them in foster homes and residential facilities rising to more than $500 million per year.

"We are sounding the alarm now - we need help," PCSAO Executive Director Angela Sausser said in a statement. "We need substantially more state resources before we lose the ability to provide essential services to vulnerable children."

The data indicate increasing rates of growth in the number of children in care, with the total rising from 15,145 on July 1 to more than 15,500 on Oct. 1.

The association pointed to some help it received from the legislature in the budget bill (HB 49), an additional $15 million. Yet foster care placement costs have increased by about $45 million since last year, not counting staffing or other agency services, the group said.

"Ohio needs a long-term solution to this crisis - and leadership to get us there before agency budgets collapse and our workforce jumps ship," Ms. Sausser said. "We already have a lack of available foster homes in Ohio. With the projected increases, we will have children sleeping in county agency lobbies with no available foster family to take them in."

Other state efforts include work by Attorney General Mike DeWine's office including a 14-county pilot project designed to help families affected by parental opioid abuse. (See

Gongwer Ohio Report, March 24, 2017) Another effort by the AG's office provides more funding for children services agencies to boost the number of foster families available. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, December 20, 2017)

Ms. Sausser pointed to work in California, where that state is realigning services along a continuum of care.

The increase in placements, she said, doesn't include the number of children placed with relatives.

"Placing abused and neglected children with kin leads to better long-term outcomes and is far less costly to government, but it means that grandparents on fixed incomes and aunts with kids of their own must find a way to pay for food, clothes, child care and other expenses," she said. "The legislature stepped up again and provided $15 million a year in federal funds to create child care assistance for kinship families. However, that program has been delayed."

Overdose Totals: In a related development, new data released by the federal government show Ohio with the second-highest rate of drug overdose deaths in the country at 39.1 per 100,000 in 2016.

The numbers released by the National Center for Health Statistics showed Ohio with 4,329 overdose deaths last year, up from the 4,050 reported by the Department of Health in August. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, August 30, 2017)

Ohio's overdose total was exceeded only by those of Pennsylvania, California and Florida.

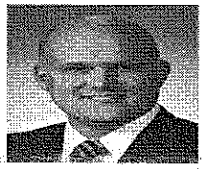
In terms of the death rate, Ohio's 39.1 per 100,000 ranked behind only West Virginia, which had a rate of 52. New Hampshire was at 39.0, the District of Columbia at 38.8 and Pennsylvania at 37.9.

National totals showed a continued increase in deaths from heroin and other opioids, coupled with a dramatic surge in the number of deaths from synthetic opioids other than methadone. Those deaths totaled 3,105, or 1 per 100,000, in 2013, but rose to more than 19,000, or a rate of 6.2, in 2016.

House Republican Announces Plan To Crack Down Drug Dealers

Drug dealers in Ohio could face much stiffer penalties under a proposal unveiled Thursday.

Rep. Scott Wiggam (R-Wooster) announced plans to introduce legislation that would boost trafficking charges for all Schedule I and Schedule II substances, with the exception of marijuana, to a minimum third-degree felony that carries a mandatory prison term.



Scott Wiggam

"No longer will drug dealers be able to operate in this state with little fear for the law," Rep. Wiggam said during a Statehouse news conference.

While the lawmaker praised the state's effort to combat the drug epidemic, including $180 million in the two-year budget (HB 49), he said deterrence and accountability are missing, and hopes his bill will provide those two components to the fight.

Over the past four years, he said, overdose deaths have skyrocketed by 212%, while traffickers going to prison fell by 4% over that same time period.

"Ohio's law is too weak to deter drug traffickers from continuing to flood our streets with their products," he said. "Law enforcement officers have grown weary and demoralized from arresting the same criminals for drug trafficking only to see them released into our society with little more than a slap on the wrist."

Wayne County Prosecutor Dan Lutz voiced that frustration. He said a trafficker in his county was recently arrested after knowingly selling heroin mixed with fentanyl that led to a user's overdose death. Among the charges his office brought was involuntary manslaughter, which was later amended to reckless homicide.

Nonetheless, Mr. Lutz said the judge in the case was not pleased with the man being charged for the death of the user and told defense counsel to seek a bench trial, which they did. The individual was eventually found guilty of a single drug trafficking charge.

"Amazingly, he sentenced him to only probation," Mr. Lutz said, adding the man went right back to selling heroin.

The bill will not differentiate between those who are trafficking large amounts of drugs for profit and those who are selling small amounts to support a habit. Mr. Lutz said both are killing people by selling deadly drugs.

"We want to deter that," he said. "We want to make it too costly to do that."

Despite the bill treating addicts and large-scale traffickers the same, Rep. Wiggam said it does not take away from changes in law in recent years that have sought to treat those two groups of individuals differently in the criminal justice system.

"If you are an addict and you are selling, you are still engaged in selling," he said.

As for the impact on the state's prison population, Rep. Wiggam said he is unsure exactly how his legislation will impact the numbers. He added that the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction has yet to take a position on the bill.

But Mr. Lutz said when discussing the state's prison population, the cost-benefit analysis does not take into account the cost savings from not having people on the streets "wreaking havoc."

"Some people need to be locked up in prisons, and these are those people," he said.

Asked about the philosophy of some in the law enforcement community, including Attorney General Mike DeWine, who has repeatedly said the state cannot "arrest its way out" of the drug problem, Mr. Lutz said that attitude needs to change.

"We've got to prevent people from getting on this stuff in the first place," he said.

Mike Brem, president of the Ohio Task Force Commanders Association, likened the battle against opioids to the fight against crack.

"We feel this penalty increase will deter drug traffickers as it did the same way with the crack epidemic in the 80's," he said.

The legislation, dubbed the "Drug Trafficking Deterrence Act," has 18 co-sponsors, according to Rep. Wiggam.

The bill also has the backing of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association, the Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association, the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police and the OTFCA, Rep. Wiggam said.

'Significant Update' On Belmont County Ethane Cracker Slated For 2018

A Thai petrochemical company now says it will have news on whether it plans to move forward with a proposed world-class ethane cracker plant sometime after the new year.

PTT Global, Gov. John Kasich and JobsOhio leaders in 2015 announced at a Statehouse press conference that the company - Thailand's largest petrochemical and refining company - was eyeing Belmont County for the $6 billion plant. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, April 22, 2015)

A final investment decision was initially expected in 2016 but was then pushed to 2017. Last February, the company announced it would postpone a final decision until late 2017 but with January drawing near the lack of recent news has kept locals hoping for an announcement in suspense. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, February 17, 2017)

On Thursday, the company foreshadowed a "significant update" sometime early next year.

"PTTGC America will have a significant update that will demonstrate momentum for this project early in 2018," the company said. "We thank all Ohio and Belmont County partners for their support, and we wish you a happy holiday season."

The last news of the project came in October, when JobsOhio and PTT representatives met in Washington D.C. to ink a memorandum of understanding. In the MOU, the parties agreed to establish a community infrastructure development plan after a final investment decision has been reached. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, October 6, 2017)

Asked about the project's status, JobsOhio spokesman Matt Englehart said talks are ongoing.

"While a final investment decision has not yet been made, PTTGCA continues to collaborate with JobsOhio and local partners while investing time and resources to move this project forward," he said.

JobsOhio and the Kasich administration have touted the potential project as a boon for region that will draw in jobs and economic revitalization.

The company had committed to a $100 million investment as it considers the move and earlier this year purchased 168 acres from FirstEnergy for the site to the tune of $13.8 million.

Despite that, the potential development of similar plants in nearby West Virginia and Pennsylvania subsequent to PTT's 2015 announcement has sparked speculation from those not involved in the talks regarding the Belmont County project's future.

Federal Judge Dismisses Property Owners' Lawsuit Against Nexus Pipeline

A federal district court judge has tossed out a lawsuit from dozens of Ohio property owners seeking to halt work on the Nexus Pipeline.

But it's hardly the only lawsuit targeting the construction of the $2 billion, 255-mile natural gas pipeline that's yet to be resolved.

In May, 39 households - comprising 65 individuals - sued the company and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in an effort to halt the project.

The property owners said the company is improperly using eminent domain and argued FERC has failed to provide adequate information to homeowners regarding their options. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, May 15, 2017)

A magistrate in August issued a recommendation that the court deny plaintiffs' motion, opining that without formal FERC approval the court lacks adequate jurisdiction. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, August 8, 2017)

Weeks later, FERC approved the project, which Nexus argued in court filings made the lawsuit moot. Construction was then authorized to begin in October after several preconstruction conditions were met. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, October 13, 2017)

Judge John Adams agreed with the magistrate and his ruling this week from the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio adopts the magistrate's prior recommendation in its entirety.

Plaintiffs may now appeal to the U.S. Sixth Circuit court of Appeals. That's the same court that late last month voted 2-1 to stay construction on an eight-mile stretch of the pipeline through the city of Green. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, November 27, 2017)

Green is one of several localities - with others including Oberlin, Bowling Green and Medina - that have protested the project.

Green's lawsuit argues the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency granted the project a 401 certification improperly because the agency was not provided with practicable alternative routes with a smaller adverse environmental impact.

Sierra Club had also sued FERC over the pipeline's status, pressing D.C. circuit court to require FERC to rehear the case. But the group was forced to petition for the case to be dismissed after the landowner at the heart of the complaint agreed to sell land to Nexus for the project.

Groups Highlight Economic Impacts Of 'Dreamers' In Push To Restore DACA

If Congress doesn't act to continue the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, Ohio could lose out on as much as $12 million per year in tax revenue, according to a new report.

That total is how much the 9,000 Ohioans who are eligible for the program are currently paying in taxes, Policy Matters Ohio reported Thursday. All would be lost, however, if the protections for immigrants who are working and attending school are eliminated and those so-called Dreamers are deported.

If those same individuals stay in the state without DACA, many would likely take on lower-wage jobs, resulting in an estimated $5 million tax revenue loss, the think tank said. About 4,000 Ohioans are actually participating in the program.

"Allowing DACA protections to expire would really hurt Ohio but passage of a Dream Act could boost out long-term economic output," Daniel Ortiz, outreach coordinator for Policy Matters Ohio, said in a conference call with reporters.

If Congress acts to reauthorize the program that was nixed by the Trump Administration in September, the state's gross domestic product could see a long-term annual impact of $92 million, Mr. Ortiz said, citing Center for American Progress estimates.

Ohio's GDP could increase by more than $300 million annually if half the eligible Dreamers earn college degrees to obtain permanent residence, he said.

"The Dream Act would put these young immigrants on a path to pay their taxes like everyone else and really could facilitate open participation in our communities," Mr. Ortiz said.

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Cleveland) has said he's working with Republicans on a bill that would continue protections for the children of illegal immigrants, however those who are impacted by and supportive of the program say Congress can't move quick enough. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, December 20, 2017)

If a continuation or replacement isn't approved by March 5, as many as 1,200 Dreamers per day throughout the country will see their DACA authorizations expire, Mr. Ortiz said. Under the administration's plan, those who are currently part of the program will be sheltered until their permits expire or up to two years, whichever comes first.

Elvis Saldias, a DACA recipient who lives in Columbus, said his permit expires in about six months and he's not legally permitted to continue working as a property claims adjustor if his authorization lapses by even one day.

The recent Ohio State University graduate who came to America from Boliva more than 15 years ago said he would also no longer be able to continue mentoring the state's youngest immigrants attending Columbus Global Academy.

"I need to continue doing what I'm doing," he said, adding: "I can't imagine the urgency behind those (whose authorizations) have already expired."

Mr. Saldias told reporters the DACA application process, which includes an extensive background check, takes about five months from start to finish - another reason legislation needs passed as soon as possible.

"If they pass a bill today, it doesn't mean we're going to get our renewed DACA...in the mail," he said.

Lynn Tramonte, Director of America's Voice Ohio, called the DACA rescission a crisis, saying Congress can't wait until it's up against the March deadline to make a decision.

"The deadline was September," when the administration stalled the program, she said on the conference call. "People became ineligible suddenly overnight and were unable to apply. Those qualified for renewal were cut off. It's a crisis and...it has really impacts on everybody's lives."

Calls for quick action are growing louder for DACA to be Congress's next order of business now that it's finalized a tax overhaul and appears headed for a Friday vote on another stop-gap funding bill to prevent a government shutdown.

On Wednesday, Gov. John Kasich joined 10 other governors in asking Congress to quickly find a bipartisan solution to the issue. About 800 colleges and universities in the country, including a handful from Ohio, have also pressed for a resolution. (See Gongwer Ohio Report, December 20, 2017)

U.S. Sen. Portman (R-Terrace Park) has said there is an interest in reinstating DACA into permanent law, but it may come with some parameters, such as a workforce enforcement program.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform, which backed President Trump's longtime plan to end the program and leave its future up to Congress, has also said DACA's recession opens to the door to create a larger immigration strategy that could include building a southern border wall and defunding sanctuary cities.

"Congress should seize this opportunity to come together and forge these much-needed reforms in our nation's immigration policy," the group said in a statement.

High Court Green Lights Tax Board To Take Up $500K NASCAR Appeal

The Board of Tax Appeals erred in dismissing an appeal filed by NASCAR, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled Thursday.

In a 6-1 per curiam decision, the court sided with the Florida-based company by finding that the BTA has jurisdiction to hear an appeal even when the notice is filed by an individual not licensed to practice law in Ohio on behalf of a taxpayer with authorization.

The decision hinged on a 1980 ruling in *Jemo Assoc., Inc. v. Lindley* in which the court found that any authorized agent may file an appeal on behalf of a taxpayer, even if doing so amounts to the unauthorized practice of law, the court's media arm reported.

After conducting an audit for tax years 2005 to 2010, the Department of Taxation in 2012 determined NASCAR failed to pay the Commercial Activity Tax for broadcasting its product in Ohio.

The company was assessed $549,520, but filed a petition for reassessment with the tax commissioner, who affirmed the finding.

NASCAR then took its case to the BTA. But because its notice of appeal was filed by a Florida attorney not licensed to practice in Ohio, the BTA dismissed the case.

The high court, however, found that the BTA was wrong to do so.

"In this case, there appears to be no dispute that NASCAR authorized Bowen to file the notice of appeal to the BTA," the court wrote in its decision. "So under (state law) and *Jemo*, the notice of appeal filed by Bowen properly invoked the BTA's jurisdiction. Therefore, the BTA erred in dismissing NASCAR's appeal for lack of jurisdiction."